

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 72  
By Henry

A RESOLUTION to oppose the closing of the Nashville School of Law.

WHEREAS, for 85 years the Nashville School of Law has offered a quality, convenient and affordable legal education to Tennesseans who work during the day and otherwise would not have the opportunity to study law; and

WHEREAS, in welcoming and accommodating the needs of working men and women, the school has opened the door for countless dedicated and talented people to take a greater role in this state's business and civic affairs; and

WHEREAS, founded by four Vanderbilt Law School graduates, the Nashville School of Law not only educates and serves the legal community, it also helps to ensure that a broad spectrum of constituents and interests have a voice in all aspects of Tennessee's growth and development; and

WHEREAS, recently the three-member Tennessee Board of Law Examiners stated it is considering eliminating part-time schools and requiring that applicants for the Tennessee bar exam graduate from a "regularly organized" law school accredited by the American Bar Association; and

WHEREAS, Board is of the opinion that the school's graduates don't measure up to its standards, even though Nashville School of Law graduates competently fill the judicial ranks in Davidson County and the surrounding areas; and

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WHEREAS, many prominent Tennessee attorneys, business leaders, judges and elected officials have graduated from the Nashville School of Law, including U.S. Senators Albert Gore, Sr. and Harlan Mathews, 55 judges, 3 district attorneys, 41 assistant district attorneys, 25 city attorneys, a public defender, 21 assistant public defenders and 4 state legislators; and

WHEREAS, for a school whose mission is to provide a quality, affordable legal education for working people, the Nashville School of Law has an integral role to play in the legal system. The administration's sound decision not to seek costly ABA accreditation serves to ensure this mission is not compromised; and

WHEREAS, under the astute leadership of Judge Joe Loser, the school has a unique ability to attract top faculty members, all of whom are judges and practicing attorneys whose professional experience gives students valuable insight into the day-to-day practice of the law; and

WHEREAS, one of the Board's responsibilities, according to chairman Harris Lee Barfield of Nashville, is to ensure that the facilities and course of study of the law schools in Tennessee are periodically inspected; and

WHEREAS, during Judge Loser's tenure as dean of the school, the administration, faculty and students have embraced these precepts: moving from cramped, rented quarters in the Downtown YMCA to a newly renovated \$1.2 million campus; improving the quality and size of the library, to include 16,000 hard volumes, 30,000 volumes on Westlaw and approximately 3,500 volumes on disk; tightening admission standards; reducing class size; and repeatedly raising graduation requirements; and

WHEREAS, despite these advances the Board claims it still has "concerns" about the school's admission standards, dropout rate and poorer-than-average pass rate on the state bar exam, a pass rate that in 1996 was 73.6%, compared to a state average of 75% for Tennessee's private and state-funded law schools; and

WHEREAS, for these reasons the Tennessee Board of Law Examiners' latest actions can be appropriately described as lacking in basis; and

WHEREAS, the administration, alumni, faculty and especially the students at the Nashville School of Law welcome the wholehearted support of this legislative body in their unflagging commitment to the preservation of their fine institution; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE-HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we strongly oppose any action by the Tennessee Board of Law Examiners that will adversely effect the Nashville School of Law's ability to pursue and carry out its mission and purpose, and urge them to carefully consider the repercussions such drastic action would have upon the school, its many loyal supporters and the Tennessee legal community as a whole.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That appropriate copies of this resolution be prepared for presentation to Harris Lee Barfield, each member of the Tennessee Board of Law Examiners and Dean Loser, with this final resolving clause omitted from such copy.